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## Pirkei Avos - 082 Erev Rav In The Soul

### ***Now That We Are After The Sin, We Need A Rav\Teacher***

The Mishnah (in Avos) says: “Make for yourself a *rav* (a teacher).” We have explained in the past<sup>[1]</sup>, according to the approach of the Maharal, that this means that you on your own must decide who is your *rav*.

To “make” for yourself a teacher is the concept of ***asiyah***, to make, to do action. The Vilna Gaon and others explain that *asiyah* is a concept that came after the sin of Adam. Before the sin, there was no concept of *asiyah*. All *asiyah* came from the sin. After the sin, Adam was cursed with having to work, which really meant that the world of action all came after the sin. Had Adam remained in Gan Eden, there would have been no need for action.

The “world of action”, *asiyah*, is what we are in. Since we are found after the sin, we must mainly act. But before the sin, there was no concept of action. The mitzvos take effect on us because we are in a world of action. When the soul returns to the Heaven where it came from, there is no action, so we see that action is not the intended state of mankind.

Thus, to “make for yourself a *rav*” implies that had there been no sin, there would be no need to make for yourself a *rav*.

### ***Each Person Has His Own Rav***

Therefore, the Mishnah needs understanding: What exactly is the concept of a *rav*?

Also, what does it mean to make “for yourself” a *rav*? (Obviously, the *rav* of Klal Yisrael, who is Moshe Rabbeinu, is not what the Mishnah is telling us about. The Mishnah is speaking about each person’s private *Rav*. Everyone has their own *Rav*, because each person makes their own *Rav* for themselves.)

We explained in the past that the Maharal says that you make for yourself a *rav* by learning from each person’s ***chochmah*** (wisdom). You see different *chochmah* in each person, and each person sees different *chochmah*. Thus, when you make for yourself a *rav*, it is not the same *rav* as your friend - even if your friend has the very same *rav*. Why? Because your friend sees different understandings in the *rav*. So each person has his own *rav*, because each person learns different *chochmah* from his *rav*.

### ***The Kidneys of Avraham Avinu: The Concept of The “Inner Teacher”***

Even more so, to “make for yourself a *rav*” is as follows.

Adam had no *rav*. The angels taught him the Torah, but that was only after the sin. Before the sin, there was no *rav*, because G-dliness was revealed to him; all was known to him.

The root of *Klal Yisrael* began with Avraham Avinu. Who was his *rav*? It seems that Shem and Ever were his teachers, as we know that he learned by them. But Chazal say that “Avraham learned Torah from within himself”. [2] Chazal elsewhere say that he learned Torah from his kidneys, and that his kidneys advised him like two teachers of advice. This is another way of describing how he learned Torah from within himself.

The root of *Klal Yisrael*, Avraham Avinu, did not have a *rav*; he did not have the simple kind of *rav* that we need to have, which the Mishnah tells us to make for ourselves. Why? It is because the entire concept of *rav* came after the sin, for *rav* is made through *asiyah*, and *asiyah* was introduced only after the sin. Adam HaRishon didn’t need a *rav*, because he was above sin.

Making for yourself a *rav*, according to the Maharal, means to learn *chochmah* from all people. Adam knew all the *chochmah*, because his soul included all souls. We, however, need a *rav* from the outside, because we need to learn *chochmah* from others [as none of our souls are all-inclusive like Adam’s].

The concept of a *rav* is entirely about learning *chochmah* from outside of ourselves. This is hinted to from the word *rav*, which has the words *rav bar*, and *bar* means “outside”. Adam, who contained all *chochmah*, didn’t need to learn anything from others. Only after the sin did there become a need for a *rav*, a need to learn *chochmah* from others; before the sin, Adam had all the *chochmah* inside himself, for his soul included every soul.

Avraham Avinu was the one who began to fix the sin of Adam. There became a need for a teacher after the sin, so he made for himself an outer teacher, therefore, he went to Shem and Ever. But he also had an inner teacher, just like Adam had: his two kidneys advised him.

The deeper understanding is that even before the sin there was also a concept of *rav*, but the *rav* came from within man. Adam, before the sin, really did have a *rav*: his very soul.

After the sin, the level of his soul changed; his soul became disparate. Avraham Avinu came to fix the sin of Adam – what did he fix? He fixed the fact that the sin caused the need for an outer teacher. He still had an outer teacher, of course, but along with this, he also had an inner teacher: he learned Torah from within himself.

Avraham stands for “*av bar*” – *av* means father, meaning, he was “above” the level of *bar* \ outside teacher, and thus he reached the point that is above the level of “*rav*”. So at the same time that he learned Torah from Shem, he also made sure to have Torah from within himself.

### **“Outer” Teacher and “Inner” Teacher**

What does it mean that the kidneys were like two teachers to Avraham Avinu? One understanding, the simple understanding, is to use the other statement of Chazal in order to understand this: that “Avraham learned Torah from within himself”.

That is true, but there is a deeper understanding, and it lays in understanding the difference between Esav and Yaakov. “Esav” is from the word *asu* \ *asiyah*, because Esav represents this outside world, the world of action. Yaakov, though, is represented by the ***kol*** Yaakov, the “voice of Yaakov”.

When one learns Torah **only** from an outside teacher represents the level of Esav, who is all about *asiyah*, then he knows how to make for himself a teacher, but he is entirely living on this external world; for he has no inner world of his own. This resembles the mentality of Esav, who lives for this world of *asiyah*, who has no "**kol**" (voice) inside himself. Yaakov, though, is all about the "voice" of Yaakov – a voice within; an inner teacher.

These are two totally different concepts of "rav".

Who is the teacher of a person? The Gemara (in the second chapter of Tractate Bava Metzia) says that it is "one whom you learn "**rov chochmaso**" (most of your wisdom) from". That is one kind of *rav*. But the Mishnah in *Avos* here describes a different kind of *rav*: to learn *chochmah* from **all** people, as the *Maharal* explained; it refers to the inner teacher, to the kidneys which advise.

So there is a concept of "rav" who is **rov** (one whom you learn **most** of your wisdom from), and there is also a different concept of *rav*: one who is **kol**, to learn from "all people"; and **kol** also can mean "**voice**", the "voice of Yaakov".

Adam before the sin had a *rav* in himself, which is the kind of *rav* that is **kol**: it contained **all chochmah**, and it was a **kol\voice** from within. After the sin, there became a need for a *rav*. Avraham began to fix this with by having both an outer *rav* as well as his inner *rav*; he began to access the *rav* that is **kol**, which refers to the internal kind of *rov*.

### **"Outer Teacher" Is For Removing Yourself From Doubt**

What is the concept of "rav" that is **rov** (a *rav* that you learn most of your wisdom from) and what is "rav" of **kol** (the inner teacher)?

The kind of *rav* which you learn *rov chochmaso* (most of your wisdom) from has two facets to this.

Firstly, we need to ask: why is a *rav* called a "rav"? Simply speaking, it is because one does not know things, so he needs a *rav* to teach him.

But the inner definition is as follows: Chazal say to "make for yourself a *rav* and remove yourself from doubt". A doubt, *safek*, is decided when there is a *rov*, a majority, which tells you how to approach the doubt. A doubt means that you have two options, and a *rov* (majority) can come and tell you how to decide [as we know from *Halacha*]. A *safek\doubt* is only a "doubt" when there is *rov\majority* to help you decide what to do; the *rov* decides how to take care of the doubt.

So when you make for yourself a *rav*, it is because you have doubt, and the *rav* removes the doubt. That is one kind of *rav*: you have a doubt, and the doubt is removed through having and consulting a *rav*.

### **"Outer Teacher" Is Necessary In Order To Have Fear of Heaven**

Another reason why you need to have an outer teacher is because as the Mishnah elsewhere says, "The fear of your teacher should be to you like fear of Heaven." In order to receive *morah* (awe of Heaven), you need a *rav* as an example. In order to get to *Yiras Shomayim*\fear of Heaven, you need to have *yirah* from your *rav*, so that you can understand that you need to fear Hashem; this reflects the concept of "*From my flesh I see G-d.*" Fear of your *rav* reminds you to fear Hashem.

The outer kind of teacher a person needs to have, "rav" from the word "rov" (majority), is also from the word *ribuy* (many), and it is also from the word *riv* (argument). This implies that when there is doubt, you have two sides, which creates a *riv* (argument). It is well-known that Amalek is the source

of *safek* (doubt) and *riv* (argument). A doubt means you have two sides that oppose each other. As we know from Halacha, a doubt is decided through following the *rov*, the majority.

Fearing your teacher is to fear him like how you fear Heaven; why indeed must you fear your teacher like this? Adam, before the sin, didn't need fear of a teacher in order to fear Hashem. After the sin, he grew afraid, and he didn't want to come out of hiding when Hashem was calling his name. After the sin, we needed fear of a teacher, because there became a need to fear Hashem now that Adam sinned; and in order to fear Hashem we need fear of a teacher. We are missing revelation of the *Shechinah*, therefore, our body requires fear of Hashem.

*Rov* is majority, and it can help you decide when you have doubt, but it is not yet the higher level. *Kol* is the higher level. *Kol* reflects the Mishnah that says "Who is wise? One who learns from all people." That is the inner teacher, the kidneys, the *kelayos*, from the word *kol*.

When one learns Torah from his *rav*, the *rav* has more *chochmah* than the student; when he wants to teach the Talmid, he narrows down his *chochmah* onto a level that the *talmid* will understand. This is written about in many places. So when a *talmid* is hearing Torah from his *Rav*, he is being taught not from the general *chochmah* of the *Rav* - rather, he is receiving *chochmah* on a level that is tailored to what he can understand. He is hearing the *pratim* (details) of *chochmah* from his *rav*; he is not learning the *klal* (general wisdom) of his *rav*.

A *talmid* does not hear from his teacher the *kol*/*klal* of the *chochmah*; rather, he hears a *ribuy* (a lot) of *peratim* (details), or *rov* (most) of his wisdom. He hears much details, but he does not get the *klal* of *chochmah* of his *rav*. A *talmid* must fear his teacher; the fear creates some distance, therefore, the *talmid* can only receive details, but he can't receive the *klal* of *chochmah* from his *rav*.

But the kind of *rav* in which one learns wisdom from others is a different concept of *rav*. When one learns *chochmah* from all people, this includes to learn even from people who are not as wise as you, as the Maharal says; here there is no concept of fearing the *rav*, because you do not fear one who is lower than your level. Since there is no fear here, you are able to receive the *klal* of *chochmah* from each person you learn from.

Thus, there is a need to learn from all people, besides for learning from your *rav*. From your *rav* you get many, many details of wisdom, but the wisdom has been diluted for you so that you can understand it. But from learning from all people you receive undiluted wisdom.

This is the deep difference between outer teacher and inner teacher.

Each of the *Avos* had a *kol* - they each said that they have *kol*. The Gemara says that Avraham was blessed with "*bakol*", "with everything"; Yitzchok was blessed with "*mikol*", with everything; and Yaakov said, "*Yeish li kol*," I have everything." In other words, they had the *chochmah* of *kol* (all-inclusive wisdom). Avraham learned the *klal* of *chochmah* from his two *kelayos*\kidneys. He received details of knowledge from Shem and Ever; but as we know, Shem and Ever are not part of the Jewish people. He received his "outer teacher" from them. But the Jewish people are built on the *kol* inside the *Avos* - the *klal* of *chochmah* that came from inside the *Avos*; and not from Shem and Ever.

This is the meaning of "*klal gadol b'Torah*" ("the great rule of the Torah") - the *kelal* of *chochmah* in Yisrael, which is the *chochmah* of Yisrael which was around before creation, for Yisrael is called "*Raishis Chochmasa*", the beginning of all wisdom.

Avraham is called *av hamon b'goyim* (father of the nations) - he is the *kelal* of *chochmah*, which is *kol*. Adam before the sin had this.

When a person learns everything from an “outside” *rav* and he has no “inner” *rav*, even if he learned everything from one specific *rav*, he only gets *pratim* details of *chochmah*, not the *klal* of *chochmah*.

### **An Even More Inner Teacher**

Until now we explained the two levels of *rav*: *rav*\rov (which is the external level of *rav*) and *rav* of *ko*\*kela*\*kelayos* (the inner level of *rav*).

There is also a third level of *rav*, and it is the concept of how “Avraham learned Torah from himself.” He learned Torah from his **etzem**, from his very self. This is a higher level than even the kidneys, which were the inner advisors of Avraham.

There is a *kelal* to *chochmah* (all-inclusive wisdom) and there is *perat* in *chochmah* (details in wisdom). A *rav* in the simple sense is one who you learn *peratim* of *chochmah* from (as it was explained above). A *rav* of *kelayos*\*kelal* is referring to one whom you learn the *kelal* of *chochmah* from, which is when you learn from “all” people, (as the Maharal explains our Mishnah).

Higher than this, though, is the kind of *chochmah* which the possuk in *Iyov* describes: “Wisdom, from where is it found?” The possuk is telling us that all *chochmah*\wisdom is rooted in the point of *ayin*, “nothingness”, the point that is above wisdom, which is its source: *ayin*. So to learn Torah from within oneself (from his *etzem*\essence) is to learn from a point above *chochmah*.

When a person learns Torah from his *rebbe*\teacher, usually, he is learning *chochmah*. But the true understanding doesn't come from *chochmah*! *Chochmah* gives over *chochmah* - but from where does the *chochmah* come from? It comes from a source. This is the point of learning Torah from within oneself, a place where the *chochmah* is drawn from.

We learn Torah with our *seichel*, our intellect; the word *seichel* is from the word *histaklus*, to “see” the words of the Torah. In other words, when we learn Torah with our *chochmah*\*seichel*, we are attempting to “see” the Torah. But this perception is limited, because we can only “see” the external layer of the Torah.

The inner understanding of Torah is when we learn it through our *etzem*, our essence, which is above our *seichel*\*chochmah*. The word “*etzem*” is from the word *atzimah*, which means to “close”, hinting to the concept of “closing” the eyes - and on a deeper level, to “close off” your own analytical thoughts.

*Chochmah* contains in it *kelal* and *perat*; all *kelalim* and *peratim* were said at Har Sinai. But learning Torah from within oneself refers to the point of *peshitus* (the inner simplicity) in the soul; *ayin* (“nothingness”), which is the source of one's *chochmah*, is known as the *makom hapashut* (simple point) in the soul, which is above the point of *chochmah*.

This is the depth of what it means to “make for yourself a teacher”.

### **Summary Of The Three Sources of Wisdom**

There is an outer teacher one needs; a person learns from his teacher the details of *chochmah* he needs to know.

There is also an inner teacher one needs - the “kidneys”, which is to learning the *kelal* (inclusive) level of *chochmah* [which the concept of the Maharal that a person learns *chochmah* from all people].

But the more inner level of *rav*\teacher is that one receives *chochmah* not from his kidneys\inner

advice – rather, he can receive it from the innermost place in the soul. The inner source of *chochmah* is the very essence of the *makom hapashut* (simple point) in the soul.

So there are three levels of acquiring *chochmah*: 1) Your *rav* you learn from, whom you receive *chochmah* from; 2) The deeper kind of *chochmah*, which is called the “kidneys” – your inner *chochmah* (which you receive by learning *chochmah* from all people), and 3) *Etzem* – your innermost point; the very source of your *chochmah*, which is called *ayin* (nothingness), or *makom hapashut* (the “simple point” in the soul) or *peshitus* (inner simplicity).

This is the depth of “making for yourself a *rav*” – the Mishnah says to make “for yourself”, *lecha*, which has the same letters as the word “*kol*”. It hints to the following: When it comes to your outer *rav*, you have to go to him; *lecha* is from the word “*leich*”, “go to him.” You have to go to your *rav* to go learn from him, in the simple sense. The inner level of “*rav*” is [that in addition to having a simple *rav*, you also] when is when you learn from *chochmah* from all people. But the innermost level of making for yourself a teacher is when your soul is drawing its *chochmah* from the *makom hapashut* (the simple point in the soul).

Now, to make this practical in your life. Your soul has sections it in, and everything is in your soul. To “Make for yourself a teacher” has three levels to it as we explained, and it is inside each person. By some people, *etzem* is more revealed, and with others, *kelayos* is more dominant; and by others, they only have an outer *rav*, and they have no revelation of *kelayos* or *etzem*. But all of these three levels are in your soul, because your soul has all in it. So we can all access these levels.

Even more so, the *kelayos* can get their advice from the *etzem*. This is a concept of having many *rabbonim* in oneself. The *kelayos* can receive from the *etzem*, and the *rav* in the soul can receive from the *kelayos*. This is how a person can have a “*rav*” within himself!

There is a sharp statement of Reb Pinchos of Koritz, a student of the Baal Shem Tov, who was asked: “Who is your *rav*?” He responded, “My *neshamah* is my *rav*.” Without getting into this deep statement, the point is that a *rav* is one who is above you. Since the soul has layers to it, each layer can receive from the layer above it, and in this way, the entire spectrum of the soul can become like a *rav* to the person.

### ***Erev Rav In The Soul***

When a person has no inner order going on in his soul, what happens? Each part of himself will seek many ‘*rabbonim*’ for all different kinds of areas. He will seek one *rebbe* when it comes to *halachah*; one *rebbe* in *Agadta* matters; one *rebbe* to learn good *middos* from; one *rebbe* to learn *hanhagah* (conduct) from...This is all because his soul is scattered inside, and therefore he needs a different *rav* for each specific area.

But when the parts in the soul are unified together, each part of the soul will properly receive from another part in the soul. This is the depth behind the concept of *eiruv*, to mix, for holy purposes. The holy use of the concept of *eiruv* is expressed in the concepts of *eiruv techumin* and *eiruv parshiyos*. It represents the concept that each part of the soul can be a *rav* for a different part of the soul. It is the opposite concept of *Erev Rav*, who rebelled against Moshe, the *Rav* of Klal Yisrael.

This is how we use the force of “*Erev Rav*” for holiness: when the parts in our soul are each receiving from different parts of our soul, so that each part of our soul is a *rav* for a different part of our soul.

The *Erev Rav*, who opposed Moshe, represents the concept of opposing the entire idea of “making for yourself a *rav*”. *Erev Rav* means that they are causing *eiruv* (mixture) to the concept of *rav*. They made the Golden Calf because they claimed that Moshe wasn’t around anymore; in other words, they

were attempting to blame Moshe for making the Golden Calf, which was a way of trying to mix in Moshe with the Golden Calf. That is the simple definition of *Erev Rav*. Moshe was the *Rav*, and the *Erev Rav* said Moshe is not here anymore; they wanted a different *Rav*.

But the deeper understanding is as follows. Each part of our soul can receive from a different part of our soul, as we explained. This is the “holy” kind of *Erev Rav*. There is “Moshe Rabbeinu within” that is in every soul, and in every generation, as the Rambam says. (There is also a degree of each of the *Avos* are also in our soul). That is the “*rav*” in our soul.

One who is wise learns from all people, as the Mishnah teaches – meaning, one who learns from all the parts in the soul. When they are mixed together and teach each other, this is called the holy use of “*Erev Rav*”. It is a way to mix the soul together and cause it to become unified and connected, as opposed to being a random mixture. The evil kind of *Erev Rav* is exactly the opposite: to mix around and confuse things.

### **Summary**

So there are three levels to *rav*: “*rav*” (outer teacher – learning from a *rav*), *kelayos* (inner teacher – learning from all people), and *etzem* (source of wisdom).

We all have this full spectrum in our soul, and all of our souls can all receive from different parts in the soul. This is the depth of the Mishnah’s words that you should “Make for yourself a teacher.” This is not just saying that you should go find a *rav*. It means that your entire soul can be a *rav* to the different parts of your soul!

The simple understanding of the Mishnah is that you need to go find Rabbonim in the simple sense. But the deep understanding is to make “yourself” into a teacher. When the Torah says to make “for yourself” a *sukkah*, it means that you, yourself, should go make a *sukkah*. So too, making a *rav* for yourself doesn’t simply mean to make another into a *rav* over yourself, but to make yourself into a *rav* for yourself.

The way you make a *rav* prominent is by believing in him, as we said earlier (in ***Pirkei Avos #081***). Through *emunah* in him, you elevate his status, and you cause the *Shechinah* to come through him.

But the deeper meaning, as we have explained now, is that you can from the level to the level of “*rav*” to the higher level, which is “*kol*”: If a *Rav* to you is just someone whom you learn “*rov*”, of your *chochmah* from (and indeed, this is what makes him your *rav*), then this is really a *rav* of “*riv*” (strife), and with such a *rav*, there can be resulting *riv*\strife. Therefore, you need to view your *rav* as someone who is giving you the *kol* of your *chochmah*, as opposed to someone who is giving you *rov* of your *chochmah*.

### **Korach’s Mistake**

The people involved in Korach’s argument against Moshe has the lower perspective of “*rav*” and thus they were able to oppose him; they needed to be reminded by Hashem that Moshe is trustworthy. But when a *rav* is viewed as “*kol*”, and not *rov*, then he cannot be opposed.

Why is there ever opposition towards a *rav*? It comes from *riv*, as we said previously. How do we repair the *riv* aspect in *rav*? Not through *rov*, but through *kol*.

The depth of Korach’s argument that he was saying that there is already a *kol* aspect of *chochmah* in Klal Yisrael, so he was saying that we don’t need Moshe as a *rav*. Korach said that “*The entire nation is holy*”, therefore, he came to deny the halachos of the rights of Priesthood. The depth

of his argument was that Korach wanted to deny the level of “rav” of *kol*; he was saying, either there is a *rav*, or there is *kelalos*/*kol* but there cannot be both. He was trying to take away the *kelal* of the Torah by saying how the mitzvos don’t make sense.

Why was he wrong? Because he didn’t realize that a *rav* is about *kol*. He thought Moshe was the *rav* who is not a *rav* of *kol*. He thought *kol* is an independent concept of *rav*. Korach was wrong because Moshe is not just the *rav* - he is the *kelal* where he drew his “rav” from. He is the *rav* who comes from the *kelal*; he had the *rav* on the level of *kelalos*. Korach didn’t understand this perspective about *rav*; he was aware of the concept of *kol*, but he couldn’t connect it with the concept of *rav*, therefore, he didn’t see Moshe as the *rav* who contains *kol*.

### ***In Conclusion***

So the deep way to understand *rav* is to realize that *rav* is *kol*; and *kol* is the *rav* of the *rav*, and *etzem* is the *rav* of the *kol*.

Thus, to “Make for yourself a teacher” means that the “*kol*” is the very “*rav*” of the *rav*.

All of Creation is really a *rav* to something else in Creation. the word for Creation, *beriah*, contains the letters *beis* and *reish*, which is *rav*, because everything in Creation can be a *rav* to something else.

Thus, when a *Talmid* learns from his *Rav*, he should not just view this relationship as learning *peratim* (details) of *chochmah*. To “make for yourself a teacher”, is to realize that **everything** (*kol*) is in your *rav*!

Without knowing what *rav* means, a person only knows how to learn details, here and there, and he will come to seek a *rav* elsewhere...

But when one attains inner unity in his soul, he has a *rav* in his soul, and when one learns from all people, each part of himself learns from different people, which brings connection in Creation, and this is how creation becomes your teacher.

Adam’s soul, before the sin, contained everything; he had all the *kelalim* and *peratim*. After the sin, there became a need for an outer *rav*. “Make for yourself a teacher” means that you need to view *rav* as the *kelal* of your *chochmah* - not merely as one who teaches you many various *peratim* of *chochmah*.

Moshe’s soul led the people; he connected all of them together. Moshe’s soul is the **root** of all souls. But in addition to this fact, he also **connected** all souls together. How? It is because with Moshe’s soul, each part of his soul was able to learn from a different part of his soul, so his soul was the *rav*; this enabled others to receive from him.

What is “*rav*” [in the soul]? It is when each part in the soul is receiving from all the many parts in the soul.

One who is like this can also cause others to be able to receive from him. But when doesn’t have unity inside his own soul, if he doesn’t know how to receive from the parts of his own soul, he has no way of enabling others to receive from him.

“Make for yourself a teacher” means to make your own soul into a *rav*; to connect it all together, so that each part of your soul will be receiving and learning from a different part in the soul.[\[3\]](#) And if one can achieve that with his own soul, he will be able to do the same with others.

May you merit that your entire spectrum of the soul should become one entity of "rav".

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**[1]** See **Pirkei Avos #081 - Finding A Rav**

**[2]** **Midrash Tanchuma, Parshas Vayigash**; for more on this concept, see sefer **Alei Shur** (of Rav Shlomo Wolbe zt"l): **Vol II, p.70-79**

**[3]** *Editor's Note: It seems that the Rav is referring to attaining a clarity of knowledge about the soul, which is the subject of the "Da Es" series (Getting To Know Your Self, GTYK Soul, GTYK Feelings, GTYK Imagination, and Reaching Your Essence).*

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**Source:** <http://bilvavi.net/english/pirkei-avos-082-erev-rav-soul>